THE

DANCE OF DEATH;

PAINTED BY

H. HOLBEIN,

AND ENGRAVED BY

W. HOLLAR.

LONDON:

PRINTED BY C. WHITTINGHAM,
Dean Street, Fetter Lane,

FOR JOHN HARDING, 36, ST. JAMES's STREET.

1804.

1507
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1507

2440

THE

DANCE OF DEATH.

THE celebrity of a subject which has been distinguished by the labours of such artists as Holbein and Hollar, seems necessarily to demand some investigation of its origin*.

In the dark ages of monkish bigotry and superstition, the deluded people, terrified into a belief that the fear of death was

* It would be a piece of injustice not to mention, that this has already been done in a very able manner by a respected friend of the compiler of the present essay, in a little work, intitled "Emblems of Mortality," ornamented with copies in wood of the Dance of Death, by J. Bewick, the brother of the admirable artist who executed the cuts to a history of quadrupeds, lately published. The work was printed for T. Hodgson,

acceptable to the great Author of their existence, had placed one of their principal gratifications in contemplating it amidst ideas the most horrid and disgusting: hence the frequent descriptions of mortality in all its shapes amongst their writers, and the representations of this kind in their books of religious offices, and the paintings and sculptures of their ecclesiastic buildings. They had altogether lost sight of the consolatory doctrines of the Gospel, which regard death in no terrific point of view whatever; a discovery reserved for the discernment of modern and enlightened Christians, who contemplate scenes which excited gloom and melan-

Clerkenwell, in 1789, 12mo. The editor of it will immediately perceive that no rivality is here intended; that in the pursuit of a subject of this nature many of the same authorities must have naturally presented themselves, and in order to connect it properly, must again be of course adopted. Independently of these, the rest of this slight performance is only designed as supplemental.

choly in the minds of their fore-fathers, with the gratification of philosophic curiosity. Some exceptions, however, to this remark are not wanting, for we may yet trace the imbecility of former ages in the decorations of many of our monuments, tricked out in all the silly ornaments of deaths heads and marrow-bones.

The most favourite subject of the kind, however, was what is usually denominated the Dance of Death, or a representation of Death in the act of leading all ranks and conditions of men to the grave; with gesticulations not a little bordering upon the grotesque, though probably without any view to provoke the mirth of the spectator in those times. One of the most ancient still existing, is that at Basil in Switzerland, in the church-yard formerly belonging to the Convent of Dominicans, which is said to have been painted at the instance of the fathers and prelates assist-

ing at the grand council at Basil, in 1431, in memory of a plague which happened soon afterwards, and during its continuance. The name of the painter is unknown, and will probably ever remain so, for no dependence can be had upon the vague conjectures of those, who, without any authority, or even the smallest probability, have attempted to ascertain it. To refute, or even to mention the blunders which have been committed by most of the travellers who have described the town of Basil, when they discuss this subject, would fill a volume: it will be sufficient to notice an assertion of Keysler, that the painting was executed by Hans Bok, a celebrated painter of this place, who, however, from the testimony of Scheutzer, in his Itinerary, was not born till 1584. From some inscriptions on the spot it appears to have been retouched, or perhaps renewed, in 1566 and 1616; the first time probably by Hans Klauber, whose name

occurs in the lines addressed by Death to the Painter.

It has been frequently supposed that the Basil painting was the first of the kind, but this is extremely doubtful, from the knowledge we have of many others of apparently equal antiquity. Many of the bridges in Germany and Switzerland were ornamented in this manner, a specimen of which is still to be seen at Lucerne; and it is probable that almost every church of eminence was decorated with a Dance of Death. In the cloisters of St. Innocent's church at Paris, in those belonging to the old Cathedral of St. Paul at London, and in St. Mary's church at Berlin, these paintings were to be seen. At Klingenthal, a convent in the Little Basil, are the remains of a Dance of Death, differently designed from that at the Dominicans, and thought to be more ancient. The figures remaining till very lately in Hungerford's chapel, in the Cathedral at Salisbury, and

known by the title of Death and the Young Man, were undoubtedly part of a Death's Dance, as might be further insisted on from the fragment of another compartment which was close to them. In the church at Hexham, in Northumberland, are the remains of a Death's Dance, and at Feschamps, in Normandy, it is carved in stone, between the pillars of a church; the figures are about eighteen inches high. Even fragments of painted glass, whereon this subject has been depicted, with old English verses over the figures, may contribute to shew how very common it has been in our own country. P. C. Hilcher, in a tract printed at Dresden, in 1705, has taken notice of other Dances of Death at Dresden, Annaberg, Leipzig, and Berne. Dr. Nugent has described one in St. Mary's church at Lubeck, which he states to have been painted in 1463.

The origin of all these is perhaps to be sought for in an ancient pageant, or religi-

ous farce, invented by the clergy, for the purpose of at once amusing and keeping the people in ignorance. In this all ranks and conditions of life were personated and mixed together in a general dance, in the course of which every one in his turn vanishes from the scene, to shew that none were exempted from the stroke of death. This dance was performed in the churches, and can be traced back as far as the year 1424*; it was called the Dance of Macaber, from a German poet of that name, who first composed some verses under the same title. Of this person very little is known, but Fabricius thinks the poem more antient than the paintings†. His work has been translated into Latin and French, in the last of which languages there are some very antient and very modern editions.

The earliest allusion to the subject, but whether to the above-mentioned farce or to

* Glossar. Carpentier, Tom. II. 1103.

† Bibl. med. & infim. Ætat.

the paintings seems uncertain, is in the following lines, from the visions of Pierce the plowman, who wrote about 1350.

Death came drivynge after, and all to dust pashed,
Kynges and kaysers, knightes and popes
Learned and lewde, he ne let no man stande
That he hitte even, he never stode after.
Many a lovely ladie, and lemmans of knights
Swonned and swelted, for sorrow of death dyntes.

When the arts of printing and engraving became established, various copies of the Dance of Macaber made their appearance, particularly in the Hours, Breviaries, Missals, and other service books of the church, few of which were unaccompanied with a Dance of Death; and in these the designs sometimes varied. Many of our own service books for the use of Salisbury were thus decorated, and the fashion at length terminated in a book of Christian prayers, printed more than once during the reign of Elizabeth, since which time nothing of the kind has appeared. In all

these are to be found the same dull and uniform representation of Death leading a single figure, without much attempt at character or execution, until at length there appeared, in 1538, a book, intitled "Les simulachres & historiees faces de la mort, autant elegamment pourtraictes, que artificiellement imaginees." It was printed at Lyons by Melchior and Gasper Trechsel, and is accompanied with forty-one of the most beautiful groupes of figures that can be well conceived, both for their composition and execution, being most delicately cut on wood, and surpassing in this branch of art almost every thing of the kind that has appeared before or since. This work was often republished, as well in the French, as in the Latin and Italian languages,* and has been usually denominated,

* The following is presumed to be a tolerably correct list of the various editions of this book:

"Simulachres & historiees faces de la mort, &c." Lugd. 1538. 4to.

by most of the writers upon the arts of painting and engraving, as well as by many travellers, *Holbein's Dance of Death.* It is extremely clear, however, that Holbein did not *invent* these subjects, for it appears in a dedication, which is only to be found in the first edition of this work, that the Painter was then dead, and that he had not lived to finish some of the designs, which however, afterwards appeared in a subsequent edition. The Painter must therefore have died before 1538, and it is well

"Imagines de morte." Lugd. 1542. 12mo.
"Imagines mortis." Ludg. 1545. 12mo.
"Imagines mortis." Lugd. 1547. 12mo.
"Les images de la morte." Lyon 1547. 12mo.
"Simolachri, historie, e figure de la morte." Lyone 1549. 12mo. with an address from the printer, in which he complains of some attempts having been made in other countries to imitate the cuts to his book, and informs the reader that he had caused many more cuts to be added to this edition than had appeared in any other; a declaration not a little extraordinary, for both the editions of 1547, which were also published by this person, have the same number of cuts, and contain twelve more than the three first editions. These additional

known that Holbein was at this time living, and continued so until 1555. Unluckily no evidence whatever, nor even tradition, has been preserved relating to this great artist, and it is to be feared that he will ever remain undiscovered.

After what has been said it becomes necessary to attempt at least to give some reason for the almost universal opinion, that these designs were the offspring of Holbein's pencil. Most of those writers

cuts were probably executed from the unfinished designs spoken of in the dedication to the first edition. Four of them, being groups of children playing, are rather foreign to the subject, but are evidently done by the same artist who executed the others.

"Icones mortis." Basil, 1554. 12mo.

"Les images de la mort, auxquelles sont adjoustees dix sept. figures." Lyon, 1562. 12mo. There are but five additional figures to this edition, the other twelve being what had already appeared, making in the whole seventeen more than in the first edition. Of these five cuts, which have all the delicacy of the others, three are groupes of boys.

"De doot vermaskert," &c. Antwerp, 1654. 12mo.

who have described the town of Basil, as well as the compilers of the lives of the Painters, speak of a Dance of Death by Holbein, some referring to the old Dance of Macaber, and others to the more modern one; but it is not difficult to see that they have but transcribed from each other, without taking any pains to examine the subject. Certain it is, however, that Holbein did paint a Death's Dance in its improved state, and likewise more than once. Bishop Burnet, in his travels in Switzerland, speaks of a Dance of Death, painted by Holbein, "on the walls of a house where he used to drink," which was then so worn out that very little was to be seen except shapes and postures. He then mentions the old Death's Dance at the Dominicans convent,* which he says was "so worn out some time ago, that they "ordered the best painter they had to lay "new colours on it; but this is so ill done,

* By mistake called the Convent of the Augustinians.

"that one had rather see the dead shadows "of Holbein's pencil, (i. e. on the walls of "the house,) than this coarse work."

This account is corroborated by Keysler, who adds, that the painting on the house was then *entirely* obliterated. Patin, in his travels, also speaks of a house at Basil, curiously painted by Holbein, but does not mention the subject; it was probably the same as Burnet saw. These are the only travellers who have spoken upon this subject with any degree of accuracy, and fortunately their testimony throws much light upon it.

To the book already mentioned to have been published by the Trechsels, at Lyons, they sometimes annexed another, which was in some degree connected with it, and appears to have been printed by them the following year. This was entitled, "Historiarum veteris testamenti icones," the

cuts of which are in some instances much inferior to the others, and apparently by a different artist. The designs of these are indisputably by Holbein, as appears from some verses before the book, composed by Nicolas Bourbon, a cotemporary poet, who also wrote some lines upon a Dance of Death, painted by Holbein.* To these cuts to the bible, are perfixed the first four which occur in the Dance of Death, as they likewise belong to the subject, and represent the creation and fall of man; but they are different in size, and were added, not only from the analogy of the subjects, but from the circumstance of their being already in the hands of the printer; and thus, from an odd coincidence of things, as well as a palpable confusion of the respective verses of Bourbon, seems to have originated an opinion that Holbein *invented* the Dance of Death.

* Borbonii Nugarum libri octo. Basil 1540. 12mo. p. 445.

But it has not only been asserted that Holbein designed, but that he *engraved*, or rather *cut* this Dance of Death on wood. That he practised this art, nay that he excelled in it, there is reason to believe, from some specimens that have been preserved, and which bear on them the unequivocal marks of H. H. & HANS. HOLBEN*. A set of cuts with the latter mark occurs in Archbishop Cranmer's Catechism, printed by Walter Lyne in 1548; and although the composition of these is extremely good, their execution is not only inferior to the Dance of Death, but entirely different in its manner: and the mark of HB which is to be seen upon one of the cuts in this latter work, has been ascribed without any authority to Holbein, upon the strength of

* It is not however impossible that Holbein, in putting his mark upon these cuts, might only intend to shew that he designed them, or drew the subject upon the blocks.

the vague opinions concerning his interference with the Dance of Death*.

The great popularity and success of these cuts very soon excited many imitations of them both in copper and on blocks. In 1541, Aldegrever engraved eight of them, but with very material alterations. Other editions of the Imagines Mortis, which had been first published under that title in 1545, appeared in 1555, 1566, 1573, and probably at many other times; these were also accompanied with cuts in wood by a very eminent but unknown artist, whose mark is . This mark is also to be found in some of the emblems of Sambucus and Lejeune, in some initial letters to Grafton's Chronicle, and in other cuts executed during the six-

* This mark is also given by Professor Christ, in his Dictionnaire des Monogrammes, to Hans Lautensack, and Hans Lederer, persons of whom absolutely nothing is known.

teenth century*. It is not a little remarkable, that so late as the year 1654, there appeared a Dutch book, printed at Ant-

* The inaccurate Papillon, who in matters of historical discussion is hardly ever to be trusted, has asserted in his "Traitè de la gravure en bois," that this is the mark of Silvius Antonianus, or Antoniano. Having found it upon some cuts, in an edition of Faerno's fables, printed at Antwerp in 1567, with a dedication to Cardinal Borromeo, by Silvius Antoniano, he instantly conceived that he had discovered the name of the artist in that of the author of the dedication. The fact is that Antoniano was no engraver, but a professor of belles lettres at Rome, afterwards secretary to Pope Pius V. and at length a Cardinal. His dedication had already appeared in the first edition of these fables in 1564, which has a different set of cuts engraved on copper. Another of Papillon's blunders is equally curious. He had seen an edition of the emblems of Sambucus with cuts, on which the same mark occurs. In this book is a fine portrait of the author, with his dog, under whom is the word BOMBO, which Papillon gravely informs us is the name of the engraver, and again refers to it on another cut of one of the emblems under a dog also. Had he read the verses belonging to this particular emblem, he would have immediately seen that it was nothing more than the *dog's* name, as Sambucus himself declares, whilst he pays a laudable tribute to the attachment of the faithful companion of his travels.

werp, where this artist worked, entitled, "Doodt vermaskert, or Death masked," accompanied with eighteen cuts of the Dance of Death, which in the title page are ascribed to Holbein. They are all, except three, impressions from the identical blocks of the beautiful and original cuts of this subject; but the above-mentioned artist has had the effrontery to put his mark, together with the figure of a graving tool or knife, upon several of them. It is, however, possible that he might have repaired them, as some of the smaller lines, which in former impressions seem to have been injured, are here much stronger.

It might be tedious to describe *all the imitations* of the Dance of Death which have appeared at different times, as they are exceedingly numerous; but it would be unpardonable not to notice an alphabet of initial letters with this subject, which for humour

and excellence of design, are even superior to the celebrated one; and with respect to execution, especially when their minuteness is considered, being less than an inch square, absolutely wonderful. Their composition is entirely different from that of any of the others, and one of them is extremely indecent. They appear to have been done at Basil; for in the public library there is preserved a *sheet*, whereon are printed three alphabets, viz. the one above-mentioned, another of boys at play, and the third a dance of peasants, &c. The designs of some of the last are the same as those in a similar Dance by Holbein, formerly painted on a house at Basil, and of which some drawings are still preserved; and it is therefore not improbable that he also designed the Dance of Death for these initials. They have apparently been struck off as proofs or patterns for some bookseller*,

* They were actually used by Cratander, a printer at Basil; and other initial letters, with Dances of Death,

and at the bottom of the sheet is the mark HL with the words "Hans Lützelburger Formschneider, (i. e. block-cutter,) in Basel." In this manner has been preserved the name of a most exquisite artist, whom, from the similarity of stile and subject, there is every reason to suppose the person who executed the fine cuts of the first Dance of Death. As he worked after the designs of Holbein, it is also probable that the painter might have invented *some* of the seventeen subjects which appeared in continuation of the original work, and that Lützelburger also cut them for the subsequent editions. From the extreme delicacy with which the initials with the Dance of Death are executed, there is reason to suppose that they were not cut upon blocks of wood, but of metal, as was probably the

are to be seen in books printed at Zurich, Strasburg, and Vienna, in the sixteenth century. All the alphabets are in the possession of the compiler of this essay, but they have not the monogram.

larger work of the same subject; and in support of this conjecture it may be observed, that blocks of this kind are still preserved in the cabinets of the curious.

In 1780, Chretien de Mechel, a well-known artist and printseller at Basil, published forty-five engravings of a Death's Dance, as part of the works of Holbein, of which he intends to give a series. Mr. Coxe, in his travels, has given some account of this work, and informs us that they are done after some small drawings by Holbein, sketched with a pen, and slightly shaded with Indian ink, that these drawings were purchased by Mr. Fleichman, of Strasburg, at Crozat's sale at Paris, and are now in the collection of Prince Gallitzin, Minister from the Empress of Russia to the court of Vienna, at which last place he had frequent opportunities of seeing and admiring them. He further adds that Hollar copied these drawings, an opinion which will admit of

some doubt. Mons. De Mechel's remark, that from the dresses and character of several of the figures, it is probable the drawings were sketched in England, as well as Mr. Coxe's conjecture that they were in the Arundelian collection, will appear but slightly founded to any one conversant in the dresses of the French and German nations at that period, to which they bear at least an equal resemblance: again, one of the cuts represents a King sitting at table under a canopy, powdered with Fleurs de lis, whose figure has a remarkable affinity to the portraits of Francis I. If these drawings were copied from the celebrated wooden cuts, they must have been done after the year 1547, as eight of them did not appear till that time.

But it has entirely escaped the knowledge of all the biographers of Holbein that he painted a Dance of Death in fresco, upon the walls of the Palace at Whitehall, which

was consumed by fire in 1697. This curious fact is ascertained from two sets of nineteen very indifferent etchings from the wooden cuts, by one Nieuhoff; they were never published, but copies of them presented to the artist's friends, with manuscript dedications in the Dutch language, in which he speaks of the above-mentioned paintings at Whitehall. The book has the following title engraved in a border, "Imagines mortis, or the Dead Dance of Hans Holbeyn, Painter of King Henry the VIIIth." The author, in one of these dedications, addressed to the Right Honourable William Benting, informs him, that "he had met with the scarce little work of H. Holbeyn in wood, which he had himself painted as large as life in fresco, on the walls of Whitehall; that he had followed the original as nearly as possible, and had presumed to lay his copy before him as being born in the same palace; that he considered the partiality which every one

has for the place of his nativity, and that therefore any account of what was curious and remarkable therein, and of what was then no more, as being destroyed by a fatal fire, must of course prove acceptable, particularly as there were hardly any more remains of the palace left than his own dwelling." He then states, that the design of the painter resembled that of the founder of the Greek monarchy, who ordered these words to be written, to remind him of his mortality, "Remember, Philip, that thou art a man," and proceeds to describe in a very quaint manner the different subjects of his work. The dedication to the other copy is nearly in similar words, and addressed to Mynheer Heymans, who appears in consideration of his singular merits to have had a dwelling assigned him in the Palace at Whitehall. From the handwriting and Dutch names in this work, it is evidently of the time of William III. but of the artist no memorial is preserved;

however, the importance of the fact which he has recorded, will render him a valuable personage in the opinion of the lovers of the arts.

After what has been said then, it is to be hoped that no additional evidence will be requisite to shew that Holbein did not invent the subjects, nor execute the cuts belonging to the Dance of Death, which is usually ascribed to him; that he painted it however, and most assuredly more than once, seems to be beyond the possibility of doubt.

It only remains to give some account of the prints which are the immediate object of this publication, and to which it is hoped the preceding introduction will not have appeared uninteresting. It has been commonly supposed that Hollar copied these prints from the original cuts, but Mr. Coxe* thinks he followed the drawings engraved

* Travels in Swisserland.

by De Mechel, which he imagines to have been in the Arundelian collection. Both these opinions seem erroneous; for many of Hollar's prints are materially different, as well from the cuts as the drawings; and are, with two or three exceptions, very close copies of the cuts already mentioned to have been first published in 1555, with the mark of AP*. He must therefore have either had before him both the sets of wooden cuts, or have copied the paintings at Whitehall; for his acknowledged fidelity would have hardly suffered him to depart from his originals, whatever they were, and as they now remain, they are not correct copies of any single existing model.

Hollar's prints were first published in

* It is not a little remarkable that almost the same variations from the original cuts, are to be found in those of the edition of 1555, in De Mechel's prints, and in Hollar's etchings; a circumstance which renders it probable that these last were all copied from the same originals, which might have been the work of Holbein, to whom the variations may be likewise attributed.

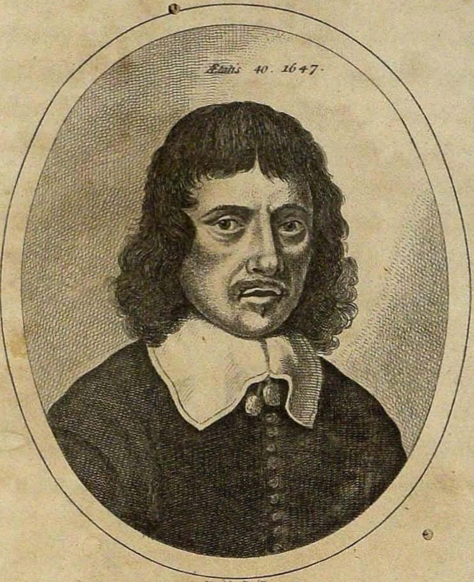
1651*, with borders designed by Abraham à Diepenbeke, and afterwards without the borders. In this latter impression the letters *HB. i.* occur upon every print, and are intended for "Holbein invenit," as appears from some other of Hollar's prints, which have upon them these words at length. No panegyric is here wanting upon the works of this admirable artist; they are sufficiently known and esteemed by every collector of taste, and particularly his Dance of Death. The plates, which appear to have been but little used, have been till lately preserved in a noble family, and impressions from them are once more presented to the public, without the least alteration †.

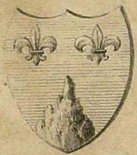
* In 1682 there appeared engraved copies of the Dance of Death, in a work entitled "Theatrum mortis humanæ," by J. Weichard. These engravings are within borders of fruit, flowers, and animals, which are executed with an uncommon degree of elegance.

† In the present edition, however, it was found requisite that the plates should be retouched, and it has been done with the utmost attention to the preservation of their original spirit and character.

Vertue, in his description of Hollar's works, mentions that he engraved a reverse of the first print, an additional one without a border, representing the rich man disregarding the prayers of the poor, and three others from the *set after Holbein*, with four Latin verses at bottom. He also engraved the six first letters of the alphabet, adorned with small figures of a Death's Dance, and one large plate of the same subject for Dugdale's St. Paul's, and the Monasticon; but this last plate is only a copy from an old wooden cut prefixed to Lydgate's Dance of Macaber, at the end of his fall of princes, printed by Tottell in 1554, and was not intended to represent the Dance of Death at St. Paul's, as Mr. Warton has supposed*, but only as an emblematical frontispiece to the verses.

* Observ. on Spencer, Vol. II. 117.





WENCESLAUS HOLLAR.

DESCRIPTIONS

OF THE

CUTS

IN

HOLLAR's DANCE OF DEATH.

MORTALIVM NOBILITAS

MEMORARE NOUISSIMA & IN ÆTENUM NON

decorbis

THE

FRONTISPIECE.

I.

It has been supposed by Papillon, without the least authority, or even probability, that the two figures represent the persons for whom Holbein painted this work. It has been already shewn that Holbein did not design this plate. It is altogether emblematical, and appears to be an heraldical representation of mortality, viz. a tattered shield, surmounted with a death's head; the crest, an hour-glass between two arms of a skeleton, holding part of a skull. The two figures are probably intended for supporters, and represent the dress of the Swiss Nobility of the sixteenth century. The "MORTALIVM NOBILITAS" was added by Hollar, and is a very concise and admirable explanation of the subject.

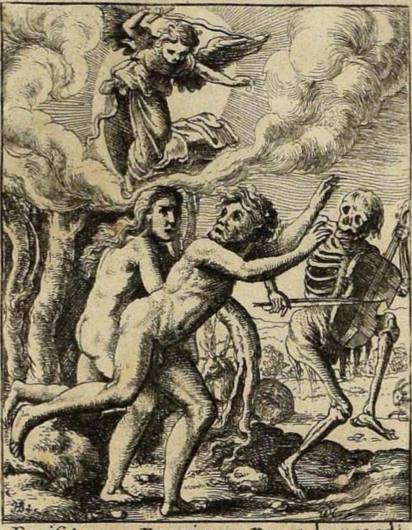
THE

TEMPTATION.

II.

ADAM and Eve in Paradise. Eve, seduced by the serpent, who in this and most other antient representations of the subject is depicted with a human face, appears to have just tasted of the forbidden fruit, which she holds up to Adam, and prevails on him to gather another apple from the tree. In representing this subject, it is very seldom that artists have been correct.

Quia audisti vocem vxoris tuæ, & comedisti
de ligno, ex quo præceperam tibi ne comede
res [illegible] 2



Emisit eum Dominus Deus de paradi-
so voluptatis, ut operaretur terram, de qua
sumptus est. Gen: 3. 3

THE

EXPULSION FROM PARADISE.

III.

Adam and Eve driven by the angel from Paradise, are preceded by Death, who is playing on a violin, and rejoicing at this introduction to his dance. The artist from whom Hollar copied, not comprehending the instrument of music in the original cut, which is the antient cymbal or hurdy-gurdy, has improperly converted it into a very aukward violin.

THE

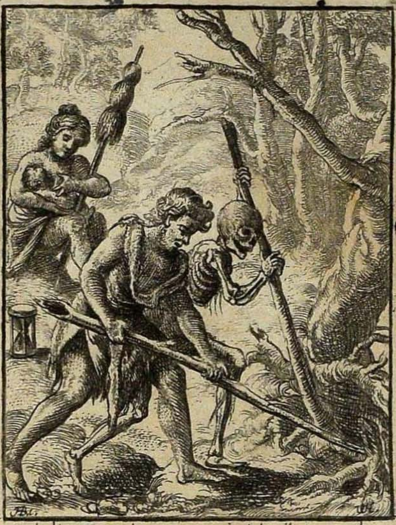
FULFILLING OF THE CURSE.

IV.

Adam tilling the earth, assisted by Death. In the back ground is Eve, suckling her first born son, and holding at the same time a distaff. From this manner of treating the subject by the old painters, seems to have originated the saying,

> When Adam delv'd and Eve span,
> Where was then the gentleman ?

It is also to be found in many other languages.



Maledicta Terra in opere tuo, in laboribus comedes
cunctis diebus vitæ tuæ, donec reuertaris. Gen 3
4

THE

POPE.

V.

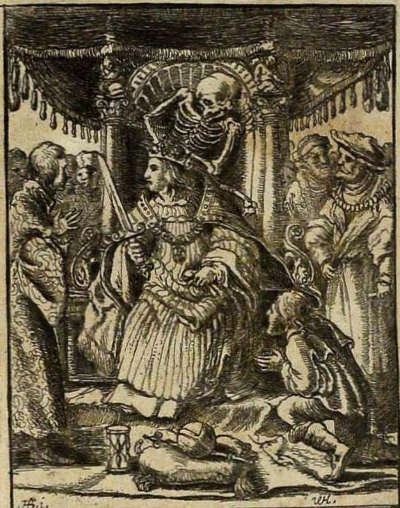
AN Emperor kneels before the Pope, who is about to place a crown upon his head. A Death behind, leans with one hand upon the Pope's chair, with the other upon a crutch. The ceremony is attended by Cardinals and Bishops: one of the former is ludicrously personated by another Death. The variations in this cut from the original are very considerable, and two grotesque Devils are entirely omitted.

THE

EMPEROR.

VI.

THE painter's meaning here is not extremely clear. The Emperor seated on his throne seems to be administering justice between a rich and a poor man. He holds in his hand the Curtana, or sword of mercy. Death stands behind him, and appears to be plucking off his crown.



Dispone domui tuæ, morieris enim tu, & non viues, *Isai* 38. Ibi morieris. & ibi erit currus gloriæ tuæ. *Isai* 22

Gràdientes in ſuperbiæ poteſt DEVS·
7 humiliære . *Dan*: 4

THE

EMPRESS.

VII.

The Empress, decked with all the pomp of majesty, and attended by her maids of honour, is overtaken by Death, who, in the character of a shrivelled old woman, points to a grave, and seems to say, "to this must you come at last."

THE

QUEEN.

VIII.

SHE is walking out from her palace, accompanied by two of her ladies and her jester. Death, having previously despoiled the motley personage of his habiliments, and grotesquely decorated himself therewith, is forcibly dragging away the Queen. The fool attempts ineffectually to protect her, whilst the female attendants join in the lamentations of their mistress.

Mulieres opulentæ surgite, & audite Vocem me-
am: Post dies & Annum & vos conturbomini,
Isai: 32.

18

Væ qui iustificatis Impium pro muneribus,
& Iustitiam Iusti aufertis ab eo, *Isa: 5*

9

THE

CARDINAL.

IX.

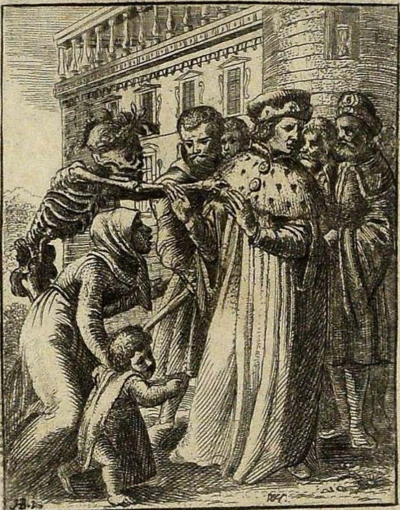
He is disposing of his indulgences to a rich offender, who brings with him a chest of money. Death snatches off the Cardinal's hat.

THE

DUKE.

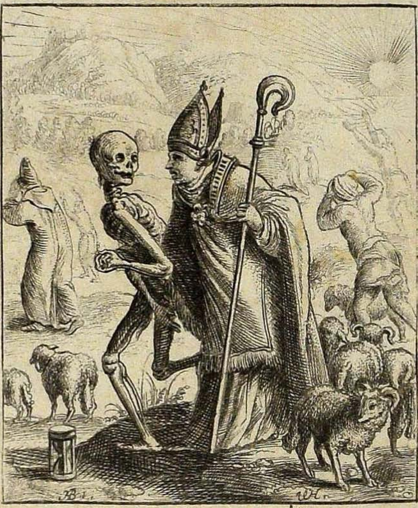
X.

He is seen just coming out of his palace, accompanied with his retinue. A poor beggar with her child craving charity of him is rejected, whilst Death is supposed invisibly to lay his hands upon him.



Princeps induetur mœrore, Et quiesce:
re faciam superbiam potentium, Ezech: 7

10



Percutiam Pastorem, & dispergen-
11 tur oues gregis. *Matt.* 26. *Mar.* 14

THE

BISHOP.

XI.

DEATH leading off the principal shepherd, the rest terrified betake themselves to flight, and the flocks are dispersed. The setting sun is very judiciously introduced upon this occasion.

THE

NOBLEMAN.

XII.

DEATH, in the character of a ragged and oppressed peasant, has despoiled the nobleman of his paraphernalia, and is dashing his shield or coat of arms to pieces. On the ground lie scattered a helmet, crest, and flail.

Quoniam cum interierit, non ſumet
ſecum omnia, neque cum eo deſcendet
gloria eius. *Pſal. 68.* 12

Ipse morietur, quia non habuit disci-
plinam, & in multitudine stultitiæ suæ
decipietur, *Proverb: 5.*

13

THE

ABBOT.

XIII.

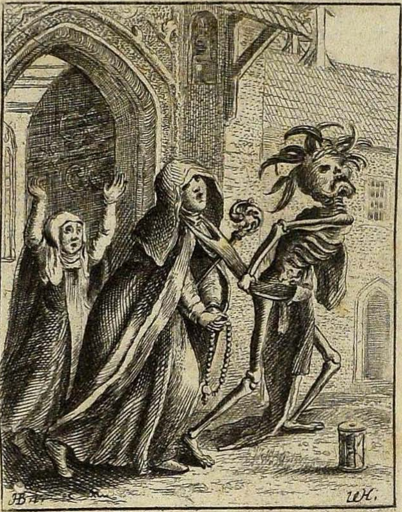
DEATH, in a very ludicrous attitude, with the Abbot's mitre on his head, and his crosier on his shoulder, has seized him by the cloak, whilst the other endeavours to disengage himself, and appears to be throwing his breviary at his assailant. If Hollar copied the original wooden cut of this subject, he has very much deviated from the admirable character of the fat and pampered Abbot.

THE

ABBESS.

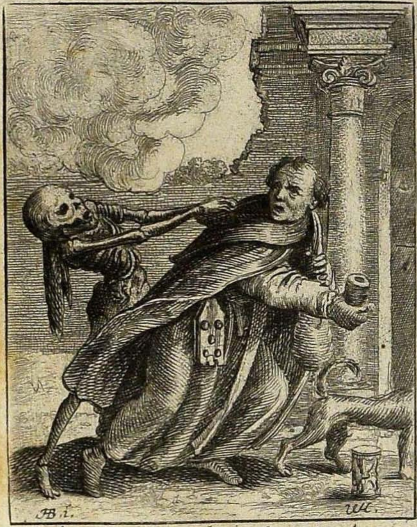
XIV.

DEATH, fantastically dressed in a sort of mantle, with feathers on his head, exultingly seizes the Abbess by the wimple, and leads her away from the convent; whilst a nun in the back ground is piteously bewailing the fate of her mistress.



Laudaui magis mortuos quam viuentes
Eccle: 4

14



Sedentes in tenebris & in Vmbra
Moriis Vinctos in mendicitate *Psal. 106*

75

THE

FRIAR.

XV.

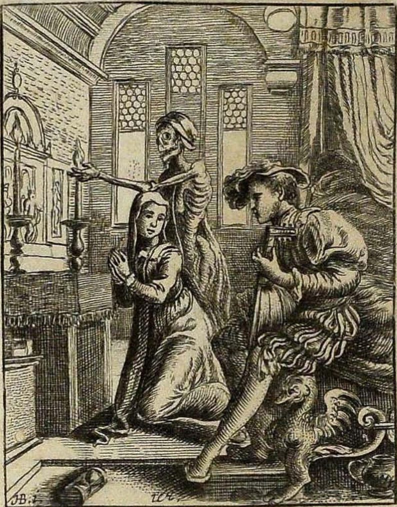
THIS poor mendicant is endeavouring to escape with his wallet and money-box from the clutches of Death, who has seized him by the cowl, and drags him away with great violence.

THE

NUN.

XVI.

Here is a mixture of gallantry and devotion. A young lady who has precipitately taken the veil, seems to have admitted her lover into her apartment. She is kneeling before an altar, and hesitates whether to persist in her devotions, or listen to the amorous ditties of the youth, who, seated on a bed, accompanies them on a Theorbo lute. Death extinguishes the candles on the altar; the painter hereby intimating the punishment which awaits on criminal love.



Est via, quæ videtur homini iusta: nouissi-
ma autem eius deducunt hominẽ ad mortem.

16 [illegible] 4

THE

PREACHER.

XVII.

From the motto to this print, the painter seems to have designed the representation of an hypocritical preacher. Death behind, with a stole round his neck, is lying in wait for him, and holds in his hand what is not very distinguishable in Hollar's print; in the original it is evidently a jaw-bone.

THE

PHYSICIAN.

XVIII.

DEATH is introducing an aged patient, whose water he carries in an urinal, and exhibits to the physician, whom he is supposed to address emphatically in these words, "Physician, heal thyself; thy patient is already consigned to me."

Medice, cura te ipsum. *Luc. 4.*

18

THE

SOLDIER.

XIX.

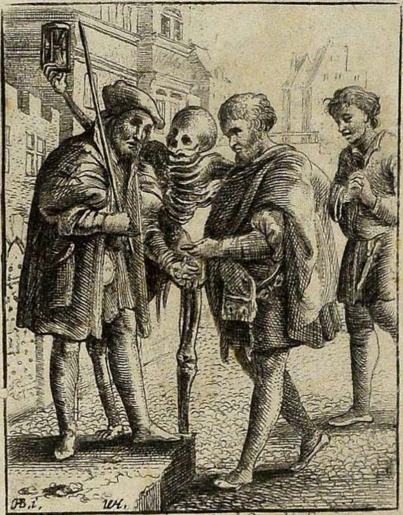
THIS hero, after vanquishing his enemies and escaping the perils of war, meets at length with a foe whom he resists in vain. At a distance another Death appears, beating a drum, and leading on a company of soldiers to battle. In the original cut, Death is more characteristically armed with a thigh-bone, instead of a dart.

THE

ADVOCATE.

XX.

THE rich client is seen putting a bribe into the hands of this dishonest lawyer, to which Death contributes, but reminds him at the same time that his glass is run out. To this admonition he seems to pay little regard, being altogether occupied in counting the money. Behind this group stands the poor suitor, wringing his hands, and lamenting that his poverty disables him from coping with his powerful adversary.



Callidus vidit malum, & abscondit se: inno=
=cens pertransijt, & afflictus est damno. Prov. 22.

Me & te sola Mors separabit, Ruth. 1

21

THE

NEW MARRIED COUPLE.

XXI.

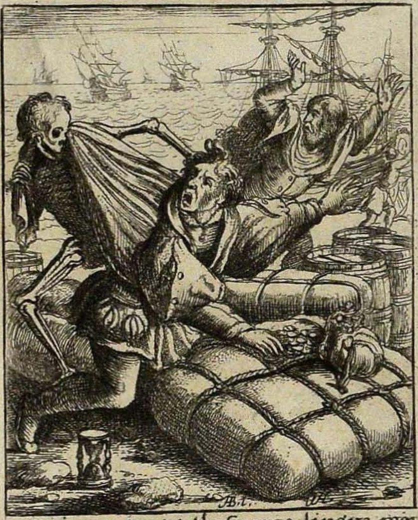
THE happy couple, whom the church has just united, are admonished by the beat of Death's drum, that they will probably undergo a speedy separation. The lady seems to be a good deal affected with the odd gesticulations of this unwelcome monitor, whilst the husband endeavours to console her.

THE

YOUNG MAIDEN.

XXII.

The lady is exhibited in her dressing-room with her maid, who is bringing her a splendid robe, with a chain necklace of gold. Upon a chest are seen a looking-glass, a sponge, a brush, and a box of paint. Death behind, ornaments the girl with a necklace of bones.



Qui congregat thesauros lingua men
dacit, vanus & excors est, & impingetur
ad laqueos Mortis. Proverb. 21 23

THE

MERCHANT.

XXIII.

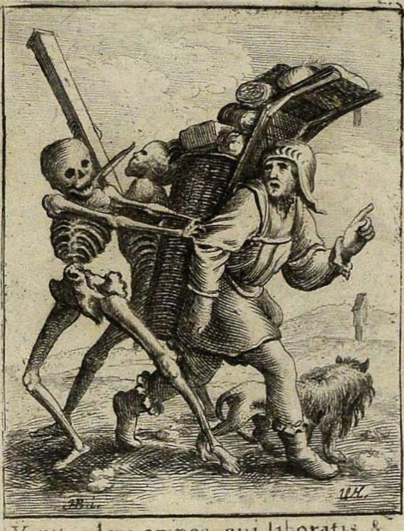
After having escaped the perils of the sea and happily reached the wished-for shore, with his bales of merchandize, this too secure adventurer, whilst contemplating his riches, is surprised by his unwelcome visitor. The rest of his companions betake themselves to flight.

THE

PEDLAR.

XXIV.

ACCOMPANIED by his faithful dog, and heavily laden with goods, the poor man is arrested in his progress by the hands of Death, who undertakes to ease him of his burthen. It is in vain that he points to the place of his destination; he is forcibly compelled to change his route. Another Death leads off this dance with a jig upon the trumpmarine.



Venite ad me omnes qui laboratis & oneratis estis *Matt. 11*

24

Stulte, hac nocte repetunt animã
25 tuam & quæ parasti cuius erunt,

THE

MISER.

XXV.

DEATH has penetrated into the strong hold of the miser, and seated on a stool, deliberately collects into a large dish the money which he had been counting, whilst the miser, in an agony of terror and despair, is wringing his hands, and vainly imploring mercy.

THE

WAGGONER.

XXVI.

THE carriage is overturned, and one of the horses thrown down. A figure of Death is carrying off a wheel which he has just torn away, whilst another appears to be staving a cask of wine*. The terrified waggoner is uttering loud lamentations at this unlooked-for misfortune; the whole forming one of the most excellent groups in the series.

* In the dedication to the first edition of the genuine wooden cuts, it is said that this figure is lickerously sucking out the wine through a reed; but this appears to be a mistake, as it is rather untwisting one of the stays which secure the cask.

Corruit in curru suo, *Chron. 22.*

Quid prodest homini, si vniuersum Mun-
dum lucretur, animæ autem suæ detrimen-
tum patiatur, Matth. 16, 27

THE

GAMESTERS.

XXVII.

Three persons at a gaming table are interrupted in their sport by Death and the Devil, between whom a contest arises for the possession of one of the party. Death has seized him by the throat, whilst his antagonist as violently drags him by the hair of his head. Another of the gamblers seems to intercede for his companion, whilst the third scrapes together all the money on the table.

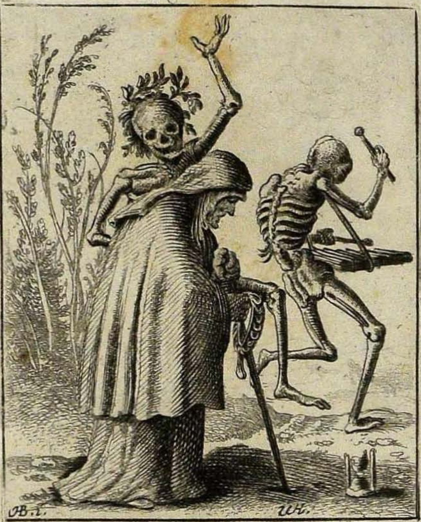
THE

VERY OLD MAN.

XXVIII.

THIS is a beautiful emblem of man's second infancy. The helpless creature bowed down with age, appears to listen with delight to the music of a dulcimer, with which Death beguiles him, and even wishes to handle it. His conductor insidiously leads him to the grave.

Spiritus meus attenuabitur, dies mei breuiabun-
tur, & solum mihi superest sepulchrum. *Iob 17*
28



Melior est Mors quàm Vita. Eccles. 30.

THE

AGED WOMAN.

XXIX.

THE tedious pace of this old woman, who is more occupied with a rosary composed of bones than with the music of a Death who precedes her, playing on the wooden psalter or dulcimer, is discovered in the impatience of another Death, who presses her forward with blows.

THE

INFANT

XXX.

WHILST the poor widow is preparing food for her children in her miserable cottage, Death enters and carries off her youngest child, leaving her with the other to bewail his untimely fate.

Homo natus de muliere, breui viuens tempore, repletur multis miserijs: qui quasi flos egreditur & conteritur & fugit velut vmbra. Iob.

30

THE

DANCE OF MACABER.

THE

DANCE OF MACABER.

JOHN LYDGATE, a monk of the Benedictine Abbey of Bury in Suffolk, flourished in the reign of Henry VI. He was an uncommon ornament of his profession, his genius being so lively, and his accomplishments so numerous, that it is hardly probable the holy father St. Benedict would have acknowledged him for a genuine disciple. After a short education at Oxford, he travelled into France and Italy, and returned a complete master of the language and the literature of both countries. He chiefly studied the Italian and French poets, particularly Dante, Boccaccio, and Alain Chartier; and became so distinguish-

ed a proficient in polite learning, that he opened a school in his monastery for teaching the sons of the nobility the arts of versification, and the elegancies of composition. Yet although philology was his object, he was not unfamiliar with the fashionable philosophy; he was not only a poet and a rhetorician, but a geometrician, an astronomer, a theologist, and a disputant. He made considerable addition to those amplifications of our language, in which Chaucer, Gower, and Occleve led the way, and is the first of our writers whose style is clothed with that perspicuity in which the English phraseology appears at this day to an English reader. His muse was of universal access, and he was not only the poet of his monastery but of the world in general. If a disguising was intended by the company of goldsmiths, a mask before his Majesty at Eltham, a may-game for the sheriffs and aldermen of London, a mumming before the Lord

Mayor, a procession of pageants from the creation, for the festival of Corpus Christi, or a carol for the coronation, Lydgate was consulted, and gave the poetry.

Mr. Warton, from whose elegant history of English poetry the above account of Lydgate is extracted, further informs us, that he translated Macaber's Dance of Death from the French, *at the request of the chapter of St. Paul's*, to be inscribed under the painting of that subject in their cloister; but it appears from the verses themselves, that he undertook the translation at the instance of a French clerk. Lydgate's poem is neither a literal or complete translation of the French version from Macaber;* and this he himself confesses,

"Out of the French I drough it of intent
"Not word by word but following in substance."

* This French translation has been erroneously given to Michael Marot, who was not born at the time when it was first printed. See De Bure Bibliog. instruct.

Again, the number of the characters in Lydgate is much less than in the French, being only thirty-five, whilst the other contains seventy-six, and he has not only omitted several, but supplied their places with others; so that if these lines were inscribed under the painting at Saint Paul's, it must have differed materially from that at Saint Innocent's at Paris. Stowe, upon whose sole authority all the information concerning this painting depends, says that on the north side of Saint Paul's church was a great cloister, environing a plot of ground, of old time called Pardon Church-yard, whereof Thomas More, Dean of Saint Paul's, was either the first builder, or a great benefactor, and was buried there. About this cloister was artificially and richly painted the Dance of Machabray, a Dance of Death commonly called the

No. 3109, and Warton's Correct. and Add. to Vol. II. of Hist. of Engl. Poetry.

Dance of Paul's; *the like whereof was painted about St. Innocent's cloister at Paris;* the metres or poetry of this Dance were translated out of the French into English, by John Lydgate, Monk of Bury. He adds, that this was done at the expence of Jenken Carpenter * in the reign of Henry the VIth. so that the poem and the painting appear to have been finished about the same time.

In the year 1549, on the tenth of April, the whole of this cloister, together with the Dance of Death, the tombs, and monuments, was begun to be pulled down by command of the Duke of Somerset, so that nothing thereof was left but the bare plot of ground, which was afterwards converted into a garden for the petty Canons †.

* This Jenken Carpenter was town clerk of London, 1430, and executor of Richard Whittington. Weever's Funeral Monum. p. 379. fo. edition.

† Stowe's Survey.

All the ancient Dances of Death, though evidently to be deduced from one original, differed very materially in the number and design of the characters. They uniformly appear to have been accompanied with Macaber's Verses, or more probably with imitations of them.

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